THE HISTORY OF

ROCK

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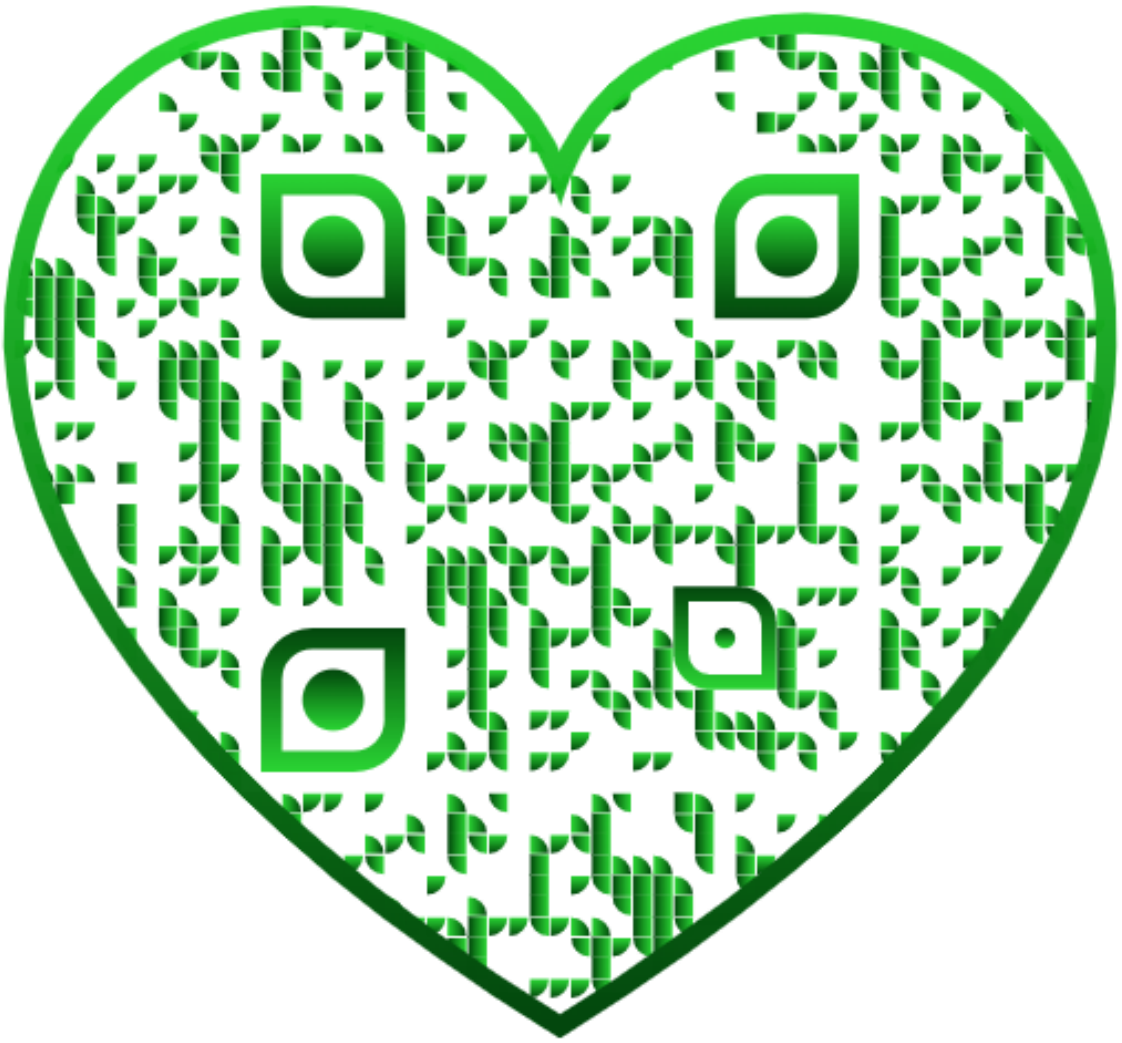

THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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CONTRIBUTORS

Byron St Tugby: A New Jersey-based lecturer in acoustic engineering, he plays banjo with the Smokey Mountain Oreo Cookies.
Jay Williams: A freelance writer, he has contributed to *Sounds* and other rock publications.
Peter Clark: A freelance journalist and editor, he has contributed to various publications including *New Music News*, and presents a weekly rock radio show for LBC.
Chris Collingwood: A freelance journalist who has contributed to *Sounds* and *Soundmaker*.
Chris Malcolm: A freelance journalist who contributes to *Music* (formerly *Music World*).
Debbie Geller: A freelance writer, she has edited for *Rolling Stone Press* and has contributed to *Record, Stereo* and other publications.
James Betteridge: A recording engineer and freelance writer, he has contributed to *International Musician, Broadcast Sound, Studio Sound, Billboard* and *Prosound News*.
Chris Welch: Features editor of *Melody Maker* until 1979 and then assistant editor of *Musicians Only*, he has written books on Jimi Hendrix and Marc Bolan.

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By 1978, the first furious wave of punk had subsided, but it had left its mark on the UK music scene. The independent labels made the industry more open to new music, while acts like Tom Robinson and campaigns like Rock Against Racism had put left-wing politics firmly in the public eye. Sham 69 and the Angelic Upstarts pushed a rowdier, populist music, while Siouxsie and the Banshees steered their own course out of punk's ruins in relentless pursuit of the bizarre.

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Tunes of Glory

Pairing pop harmonies with a rock beat proved a huge moneyspinner in the Seventies

IN THE LATE SIXTIES and early Seventies, American bands like Grand Funk Railroad, Mountain and Blue Cheer showed that a noisy, basic and unsubtle musical approach – carried by crude guitar overkill – was no barrier to commercial success. Acts such as these appealed, essentially, to young teenagers, but by the mid Seventies, with the ascent of FM radio, it had become evident to record companies that it was within the 18- to 35-year-old market that the big bucks lay. Consequently, hard rock began to cater to more adult tastes while still attempting to hold the attention of younger rock fans. The traditional riff-based, sprawling attack of heavy metal was now blended with the formulas of pop – hooks, melodies and harmonies – thereby appealing to both camps.

The professionals

The most successful exponents of this new trend towards commercial hard rock were by no means newcomers to the rock world. The members of acts like Styx, REO Speedwagon, Foreigner, Journey and Toto were, for the most part, veteran players who were able to combine musical expertise and performing experience with a thorough knowledge of studio production techniques.

REO Speedwagon, for example, had formed in 1971 and built up a reputation on the arena-rock circuit playing support to acts such as Aerosmith and the James Gang. Throughout the Seventies they refined their style in the studio, blending sumptuous vocal harmonies, lush guitar arrangements and simple pop chord structures with their original straightforward hard-rock style. In 1980, they broke into the platinum league with their tenth album *Hi Infidelity* and a US chart-topping single, 'Keep On Loving You'.

Styx had been in existence even longer than REO Speedwagon – they formed in 1963 – but it was not until 1976, when they began to augment their heavy pseudo-classical, pomp-rock sound with deft melodic touches, that they began to shake off their cult image. Their 1977 album, *The Grand Illusion*, sold more than three million copies, bringing the group superstar status.

Anglo-American act Foreigner, meanwhile, were formed in New York in 1976 by English guitarist Mick Jones, who had begun his career during the British instrumental pop boom of the early Sixties before moving into session work, and multi-instrumentalist Ian McDonald, an original member of British progressive outfit King Crimson. Foreigner's debut album, released in 1977, was a somewhat unimaginative mixture of hard-rock roots and 'progressive' posturing, yet it proved to be highly effective FM fare and established the band as a powerful commercial force.

Journey's rock pedigree was an equally prestigious one: Gregg Rolie and Neal Schon had been with Santana while Aynsley Dunbar, a graduate of Britain's late-Sixties blues boom, was a session drummer with the highest credentials. Journey's sound, dominated by synthesiser and smooth guitar, was calculated and bland in the extreme, but the polish and attention to detail of their productions guaranteed success in both the US album and singles charts.

Journey treat a fan-packed stadium to their brand of FM rock. The late Seventies saw many US hard-rock bands blending the riff-based attack of heavy metal with pop hooks and vocal harmonies. The results, although often bland, made for healthy sales.

The survivors

In the wake of these FM rock successes came a host of imitators, bands like Russia, Touch, Loverboy and Survivor who followed the AOR formula with a depressing lack of fire or imagination. And yet the original crude energy of heavy metal still survived. Van Halen, though patchy on record, provided a perfect parody of the HM genre on stage with singer Dave Lee Roth's absurd stage antics and the squawking, over-the-top guitar work of Eddie Van Halen. Blue Oyster Cult, on the other hand, brought a rare intelligence to the form with music that combined ferocious riffs with wry sensitivity, while Pat Benatar, with her raunchy power-pop, became the female sex symbol of American rock'n'roll. Although American hard rock had developed a soft centre by the Eighties, there was still substance at the edges.

BYRON ST. TUGBY

AMERICAN Gothic

Meat Loaf: nothing succeeds like excess . . .

SINCE ITS RELEASE in January 1978, Meat Loaf's *Bat Out Of Hell* has become one of the biggest-selling albums in rock history. Its other-worldly cover and musical tales of epic struggles between the forces of good and evil introduced to the world the talents of two individuals – Marvin Lee Aday and his Svengali, Jim Steinman.

All revved up

The partnership which resulted in *Bat Out Of Hell* would never have come to pass if singer and dramatist Steinman had not noticed Aday (nicknamed Meat Loaf) at an audition for one of Steinman's plays, *More Than You Deserve*. At the time, the playwright had just had his nose broken by a female biker and was unable to sing – a prerequisite for the production. Struck by Meat Loaf's physical presence and singing voice, Steinman had declared: 'This guy is my voice! He should be singing Wagnerian rock opera!' Quite where 'Wagnerian rock opera' would fit into modern rock'n'roll remained to be seen, but Steinman was convinced of Meat Loaf's talents.

Meat Loaf secured a part in the cult movie *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) and, after an excursion with the National Lampoon Show touring company, he and Steinman began work on *Bat Out Of Hell* (1978). Although Meat Loaf, born and raised in Dallas, Texas, had paid his rock dues in various Sixties outfits – notably his own band, Popcorn Blizzard – he had never been involved with someone like Steinman, whose energy and creativity made him realise his own potential.

There can be no doubt that Steinman provided much of the inspiration required to sustain an opus such as *Bat Out Of Hell*. From the frustrated teenage yearning of 'All Revved Up With No Place To Go', featuring a canyonful of guitars and a blistering vocal performance from Meat Loaf, to the hushed melodrama of 'Heaven Can Wait', *Bat Out Of Hell* was a roaring testament to Steinman's fantastic visions of the American Dream and Meat Loaf's reading of the LP's lurid scenarios.

Bat Out Of Hell was a soundtrack for teenage dreamers everywhere, without the elements of schmaltz that such a description suggests. What was so remarkable was that Meat Loaf himself was accepted as a spokesman by that generation; after all, he hardly fitted the male physical ideal outlined in 'All Revved Up With No Place To Go': 'I was a varsity tackler and a hell of a block/And when I played my

guitar I made the canyons rock/And every Saturday night I felt the fever grow/All revved up with no place to go.' Nonetheless, his deliberately seedy, slightly menacing persona struck a chord in his audience; empathy became adulation when he took his show on the road.

There was another element crucial to the success of *Bat Out Of Hell* – the production, which was masterminded by Todd Rundgren. His rigorous but thoughtful treatment of Steinman's music and the leeway he allowed Meat Loaf's vocal dramatics firmly etablished him as a top-rank producer.

For the next two years Meat Loaf concentrated on live performance, playing continual sell-out American tours while also managing to find the time to fit in work on various movies, the most publicised of which was *Roadie* (1980), a commercial failure that co-starred Debbie Harry of Blondie. The time was drawing near, however, when a follow-up to *Bat Out Of Hell* was required. The only other 'new' material that had appeared since its release was an album called *Stoney And Meat Loaf* (1979), but this consisted solely of pre-Steinman material and was of interest only to the most avid collector.

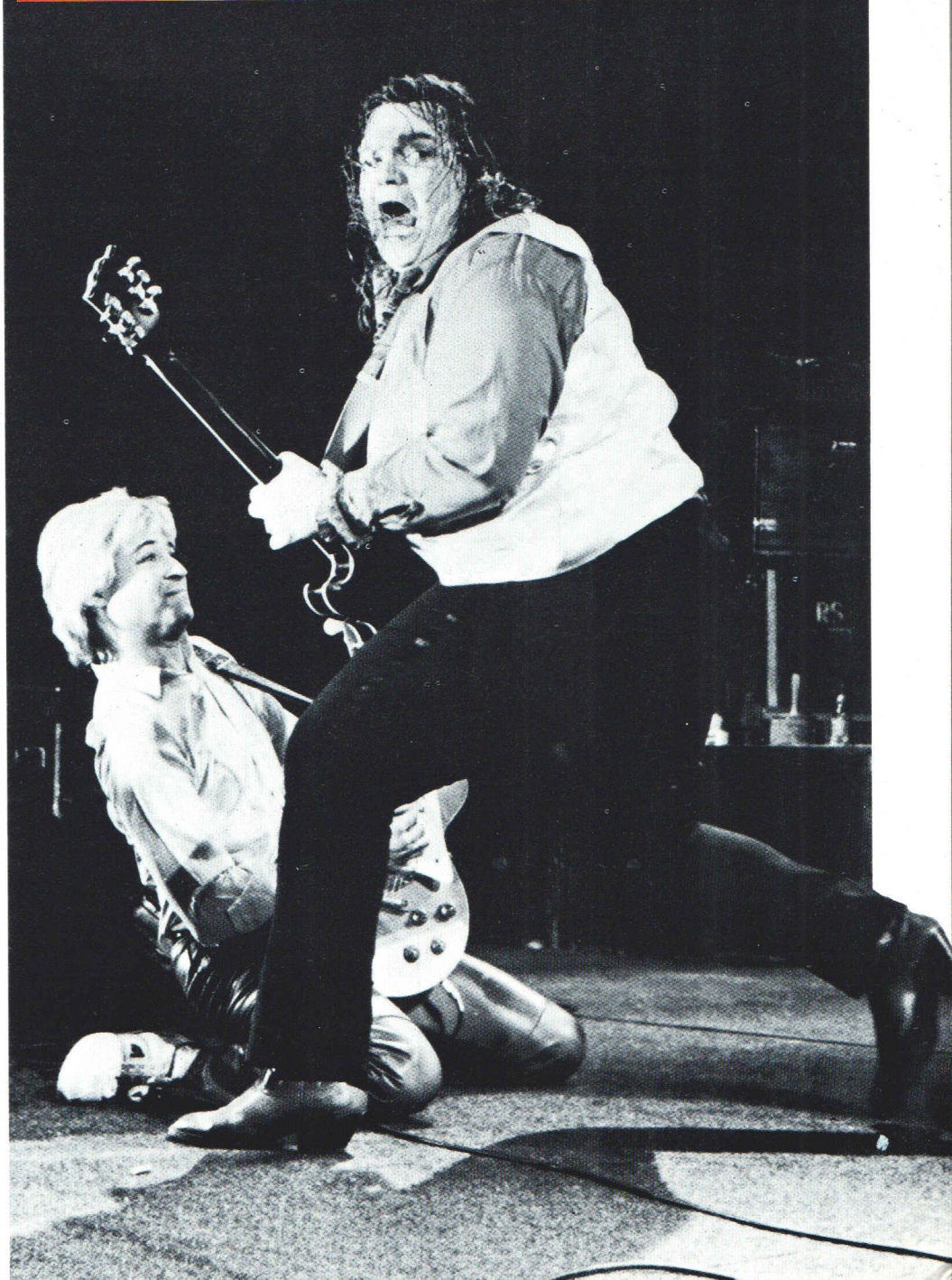
When Meat Loaf commenced work on his second album, the fatigue of constant touring caught up with him and manifested itself in voice problems. As the seriousness of his condition became evident – he had to undergo specialist therapy – material that was originally destined to appear on the album surfaced on Steinman's own solo album, *Bad For Good* (1981).

Although Meat Loaf was not involved with the record, *Bad For Good* was a logical extension of *Bat Out Of Hell*. The cover drawing depicted the hero from the cover of *Bat Out Of Hell*; instead of clinging to a motorbike, he was now clutching a girl – presumably won after some arduous battle with the forces of darkness. The LP was a resounding success and a single taken from it, 'Rock And Roll Dreams Come Through', was as strong and as stirring as anything on *Bat Out Of Hell*.

Hard to follow

After prolonged therapy, Meat Loaf rejoined Steinman and they set about making a new album, *Dead Ringer* (1981). Once again, Steinman wrote all the material and co-produced the album along with newly-recruited cohorts Jimmy Iovine (whose credits included work with Tom Petty and Bruce Springsteen) and Steven Galfas.

In the interim period, many doubts had been expressed by both fans and the rock media as to Meat Loaf's or Steinman's ability to follow *Bat Out Of Hell* with an



Left: Marvin Lee Aday – better known as Meat Loaf – sweats it out on stage. Right: Loaf gets into some meaty riffing. Inset above right: Jim Steinman, the musical brain behind Meat Loaf's throne. Inset far right: Mr Meat gets heavy.

album of the same calibre. There was a widespread feeling that *Bat Out Of Hell* was one of those rare occasions when artist, writer and producer had pooled their respective talents and come up with something so genuinely original as to be impossible to equal; the follow-up, *Dead Ringer*, was thus destined to be unfavourably compared with the first LP.

Under pressure

Although *Dead Ringer* lacked the insistent, imaginative bite of *Bat Out Of Hell*, it was clearly no epitaph. Top-notch musicians such as Roy Bittan and Max Weinberg from Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band, Liberty Devito from Billy Joel's group and Davey Johnstone from Elton John's band were drafted in to play on the album, while Meat Loaf's wife Lesley featured on the track 'Peel Out'. He also received vocal assistance from Ted Neeley (of *Jesus Christ Superstar* fame) and Rory Dodd, who had duetted with Steinman on 'Rock And Roll Dreams Come Through'.

With *Dead Ringer*, Steinman and Meat Loaf consciously or unconsciously steered clear of the epic subject-matter previously used and moved towards a more immediately accessible feel. The title track, a duet with the vivacious Cher, was released and became a massive hit. In the early Eighties the promotional video had come into its own as a means of selling a record, and the film of 'Dead Ringer' had all the ingredients necessary to sell the song – the most alluring of which was Cher, in a minuscule leather outfit, continuing a line of female vocal partners that had begun with Ellen Foley on *Bat Out Of Hell*.

Apparently cured of his throat problem, Meat Loaf took to the boards again. His stage act, brought to the UK for the first time in 1982, was a visual enactment of his songs. The highlight of the show was 'Paradise By The Dashboard Light', from *Bat Out Of Hell*, which was pure rock'n'roll vaudeville.

Meat Loaf bumbled around the set, the epitome of angst-ridden adolescence while a leather-clad girl singer, often resembling Cher in the 'Dead Ringer' video, portrayed the forbidden object of every teenager's new-found lust. The theatrical elements in the performance of every song established Meat Loaf as a firm favourite on the international rock circuit, a fact underlined by a series of sell-out tours in the UK in 1982 and 1983.

Below: Meat Loaf greets singer Karla Devito (left) and Roadie *co-star Debbie Harry. Bottom: Karla serenades him.*

Bye-bye sci-fi

There was considerably less fuss made over the arrival of Meat Loaf's third album, *Midnight At The Lost And Found*, released in April 1983. By then, the music industry had grown almost complacent about his awesome debut – and, having swallowed its disappointment over *Dead Ringer*, expected little of interest. However, *Midnight At The Lost And Found* represented Meat Loaf's biggest departure yet from his 1978 debut. Steinman was not involved with the album at all; it was produced by veteran Tom Dowd, the man behind the controls of several of Lynyrd Skynyrd's albums and many of Rod Stewart's successes.

Gone were all traces of the sci-fi covers; instead only a rather unflattering black-and-white photograph of Meat Loaf graced the LP's sleeve. *Dead Ringer* had had the same *sound* as *Bat Out Of Hell* – and the same bombastic, monolithic production – but *Midnight At The Lost And Found* was a more traditional hard-rock album.

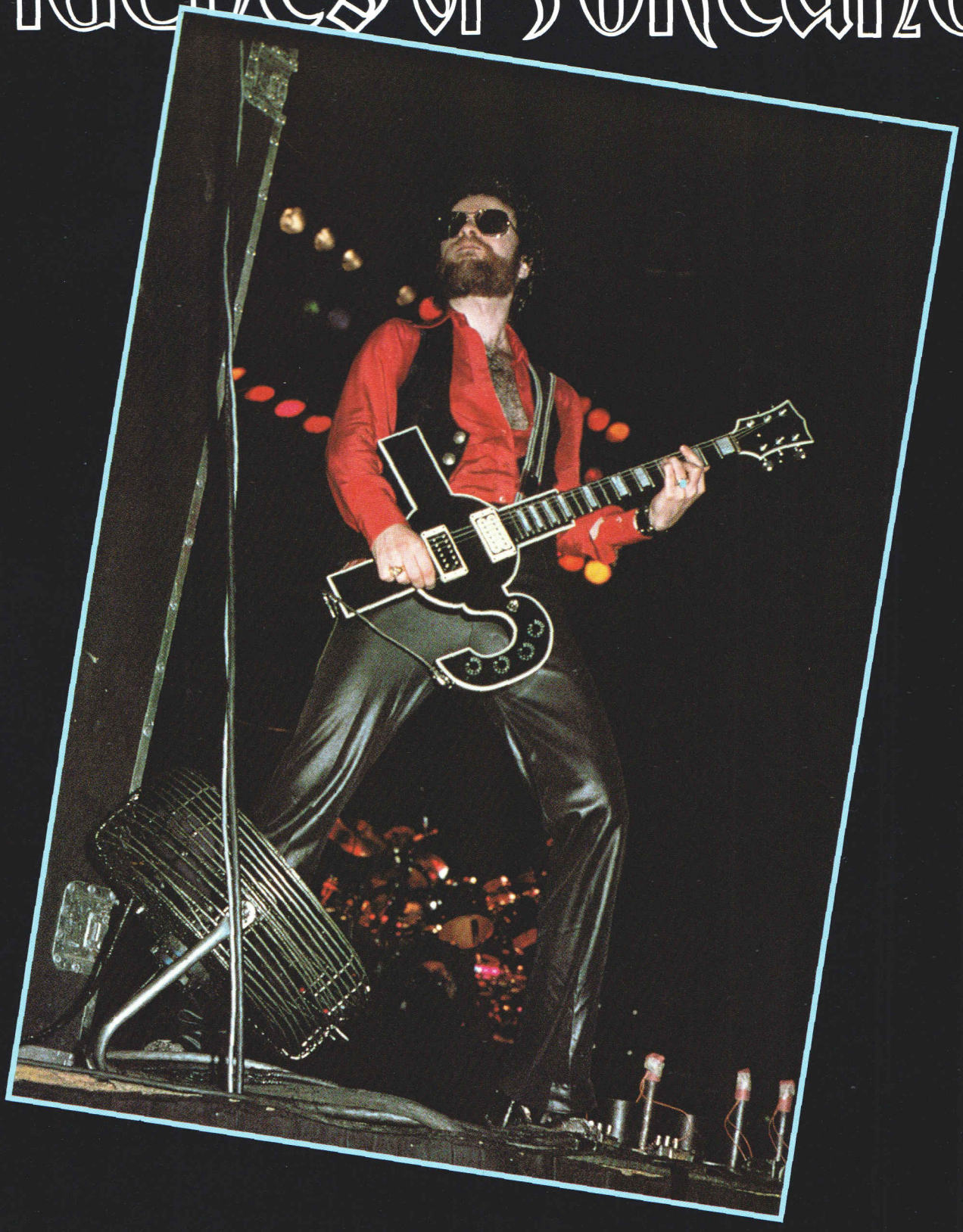
It is difficult to make comparisons between *Midnight At The Lost And Found* and Meat Loaf's previous albums, because their respective moods are so different. *Midnight At The Lost And Found* still contains the distinctive guitar-charged power of former releases, and there is obviously a great deal of potential in Meat Loaf's hitherto untapped writing abilities. It is likely, however, that Meat Loaf will join forces with Jim Steinman once more; when their separate skills are combined, the result will doubtless be well worth hearing.

JAY WILLIAMS

Meatloaf
Recommended Listening

Bat Out Of Hell (Epic EPC 82419) (Includes: Bat Out Of Hell, Heaven Can Wait, All Revved Up With No Place To Go, Two Out Of Three Ain't Bad, Paradise By The Dashboard Light, For Crying Out Loud); *Dead Ringer* (Epic EPC 83645) (Includes: Peel Out, I'll Kill You If You Don't Come Back, Read 'Em And Weep, Nocturnal Pleasure, Dead Ringer For Love, More Than You Deserve).

AGENTS of FORTUNE



The well-kept secrets of Blue Oyster Cult

ALTHOUGH THEY NEVER sold records in the enormous quantities of some of their hard-rock contemporaries, Blue Oyster Cult were remarkable for bringing a rare intelligence to heavy metal, a genre more usually noted for its base predictability.

The band was formed in Long Island, New York, in the late Sixties by Eric Bloom (guitar, vocals), Allen Lanier (keyboards, guitar), Donald Roeser (also known as Buck Dharma – lead guitar, vocals), Joe Bouchard (bass, vocals) and Albert Bouchard (drums, vocals). Originally, the group was called Soft White

Above: Eric Bloom holds down a chord on his legendary 'stun guitar'.

Underbelly, later becoming the Stalk-Forest Group and recording two albums for Elektra, neither of which was released. It was not until late 1971 when, as Blue Oyster Cult, the band signed to Columbia that their fortunes began to change.

An important element in Blue Oyster Cult's development was the vision of the band's two Svengali figures: Sandy Pearlman and Murray Krugman. They conceived an approach to heavy rock which was based on the two UK bands they most admired, the Yardbirds and Black Sabbath, fusing the Yardbirds' blues-based guitar pyrotechnics with Sabbath's dense occult riffing to form a rock'n'roll mutant of awesome power. Pearlman and Krugman produced or co-produced the group's first seven albums and Pearlman regularly contributed song lyrics which reflected his demented obsessions.

Tyranny and mutation

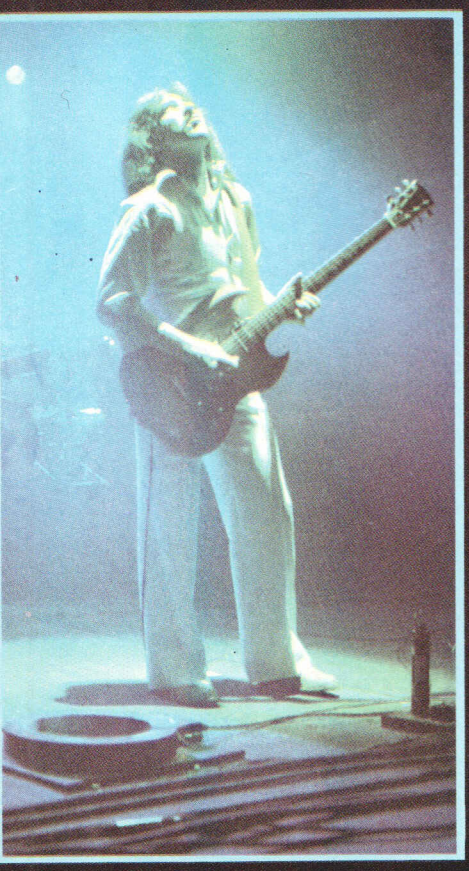
By the time the band's first LP *Blue Oyster Cult* appeared in January 1972, a distinctive sound had already been forged and, with the possible exception of a slightly thin production, it remains one of the most remarkable debut efforts of all time. From the opening power surge of 'Transmaniacon MC', Blue Oyster Cult whipped up a frenzy of inexorable hard rock. The set contained a clutch of songs which were to retain a place in their live act for years to come: 'Stairway To The Stars', 'Before The Kiss, A Redcap', 'Cities On Flame With Rock And Roll'.

It is possible to discern a refined melodic sensibility on the album, particularly in 'Then Came The Last Days Of May', Donald Roeser's chilling tale of a dope deal going horribly wrong. That track provided him with the ideal opportunity to display his credentials as both ace songwriter and nascent guitar hero. While the loud but powerful music defied easy HM categorisation, the lyrics simply defied belief in presenting a heady brew of astronomy, ancient myth, pop mythology, black humour and plain madness.

This period also saw the first Blue Oyster Cult concerts in the US, and the group swiftly established themselves as a live force to be reckoned with, capable of pleasing the average fan in the same way they pleased critics. The focal figure on stage was Eric Bloom, attired in tight black leather and mirrored shades, snarling out the words and pausing occasionally to crash out monster chords on his legendary 'stun guitar', an enormous black, overamped monstrosity. Over the stage hung an outsize replica of the Blue Oyster Cult logo, the ancient Greek symbol of Kronos (Saturn). Buck Dharma was very much the foil to Bloom's black leather nightmare, a small, dapper figure in a white suit who would step forward to solo with frantic power or chiming clarity. Behind these two, Allen Lanier contributed keyboard colourings or third guitar on the rowdier numbers, while the Bouchard brothers kept the rhythm section nailed down tight.

Below: Blue Oyster Cult go guitar crazy, from left Eric Bloom, Allen Lanier, Buck Dharma, Joe Bouchard and Albert Bouchard.

Above: R U Ready 2 Rock? – the Cult take Paris by storm, 1975. Right: The dapper figure of lead guitarist Buck Dharma steps into the spotlight.



In order to take full advantage of the success of these early concerts, Columbia released a strictly limited edition 12-inch EP in October 1972 entitled *Live Bootleg*. It contained 'Cities On Flame' and 'Workshop Of The Telescopes' from the first LP, together with 'The Red And The Black' (a taster from the second album) and 'Buck's Boogie' (which would resurface on the first official live set). In February 1973, the second LP *Tyranny And Mutation* was released in the US to a favourable critical reception. The album was divided into 'black' and 'red' sides, the former espousing a 'play and be damned' philosophy and including another crop of embryonic stage favourites in 'OD'd On Life Itself', 'Hot Rails To Hell' and the epic '7 Screaming Diz-Busters'. The second side concerned itself with weird beasts and paranormal happenings summed up in titles like 'Mistress Of The Salmon Salt' and 'Baby Ice Dog', the latter co-written by Patti Smith, longtime girlfriend of Lanier.

By 1974, a policy of constant touring in America had brought the band to the status of a major headlining act. In April of that year *Secret Treaties* was released, again to mass critical approval. The album's themes included supernatural Nazi plots, sado-masochism and general mayhem, and among the songs were two showstopping anthems in 'Me 262' and 'Astronomy'. In February 1975, the band attempted to capture the power of their stage set with a live double LP, *On Your Feet Or On Your Knees*; however, this fell some way short of pleasing the group and it is not hard to see why, for among a scattering of gems (in particular 'Last Days Of May'), there resided a great deal of dross such as the bloated guitar workouts 'Maserati GT' and 'Buck's Boogie'. To make matters worse, the album also included a thoroughly uninspired version of Steppenwolf's 'Born To Be Wild'.

Agents of fortune

At the end of 1975, Blue Oyster Cult finally arrived in the UK for their first tour, culminating with a sell-out show at Hammersmith Odeon. The London audience was stunned by the raw power of the band, the flashes of laser trickery and a winning way with stagecraft: the last number saw all five members of the group down at the front of the stage, all playing guitars – heavy metal taken to the extreme and parodied simultaneously.

Songwriting chores in BOC had always been spread around democratically and this process was taken one stage further for the next LP, *Agents Of Fortune* (1976), with each group member laying down individual tracks on a 4-track tape recorder and then presenting the finished product for band approval. The result, perhaps inevitably, was somewhat patchy, but the LP contained one indubitable ace in '(Don't Fear) The Reaper', which was released as a single to give the band a Number 12 hit in the US, Number 16 in the UK. This in turn gave the LP a boost and it rapidly became the group's most successful album. Patti Smith was again in evidence, both singing and composing, and with tracks of the quality of 'ETI' and 'This Ain't The Summer Of Love' the album fully justified its sales. A newly-developed 100,000-dollar laser show clinched the popularity of their live shows.

The appearance of BOC's sixth LP *Spectres* (November 1977) was heralded by the release of a single, 'R U Ready 2 Rock'. The LP presented a more melodic side of the band with an impressive trio of ghostly 'love' songs – 'Death Valley Nights', 'I Love The Night' and 'Nosferatu'.

Building fires

After a hectic period of touring, which again included UK dates, another live album was released in September 1978 entitled *Some Enchanted Evening*. This was a spirited workout, far superior to its live predecessor, and was particularly notable for a version of 'We Gotta Get Out Of This Place' recorded in the Animals' backyard in Newcastle. The following year, Tom Werman took over LP production duties from Pearlman and the resulting *Mirrors* was a major disappointment. For the first time, the Cult seemed to be floundering for want of direction and only 'Dr Music', an everyday tale of sado-masochism with vocal assistance from Ellen Foley and Genya Ravan, lived up to the group's usual high standards.

1980 brought a rapid return to form, however, with the June release of *Cultosaurus Erectus*, which was a conscious move back towards metal mania. The album was produced by Martin Birch, who had recently completed work on the Black Sabbath comeback album, *Heaven And Hell*, and the Sabbath connection was underlined when the two bands went on tour together billed as 'Black and Blue'.

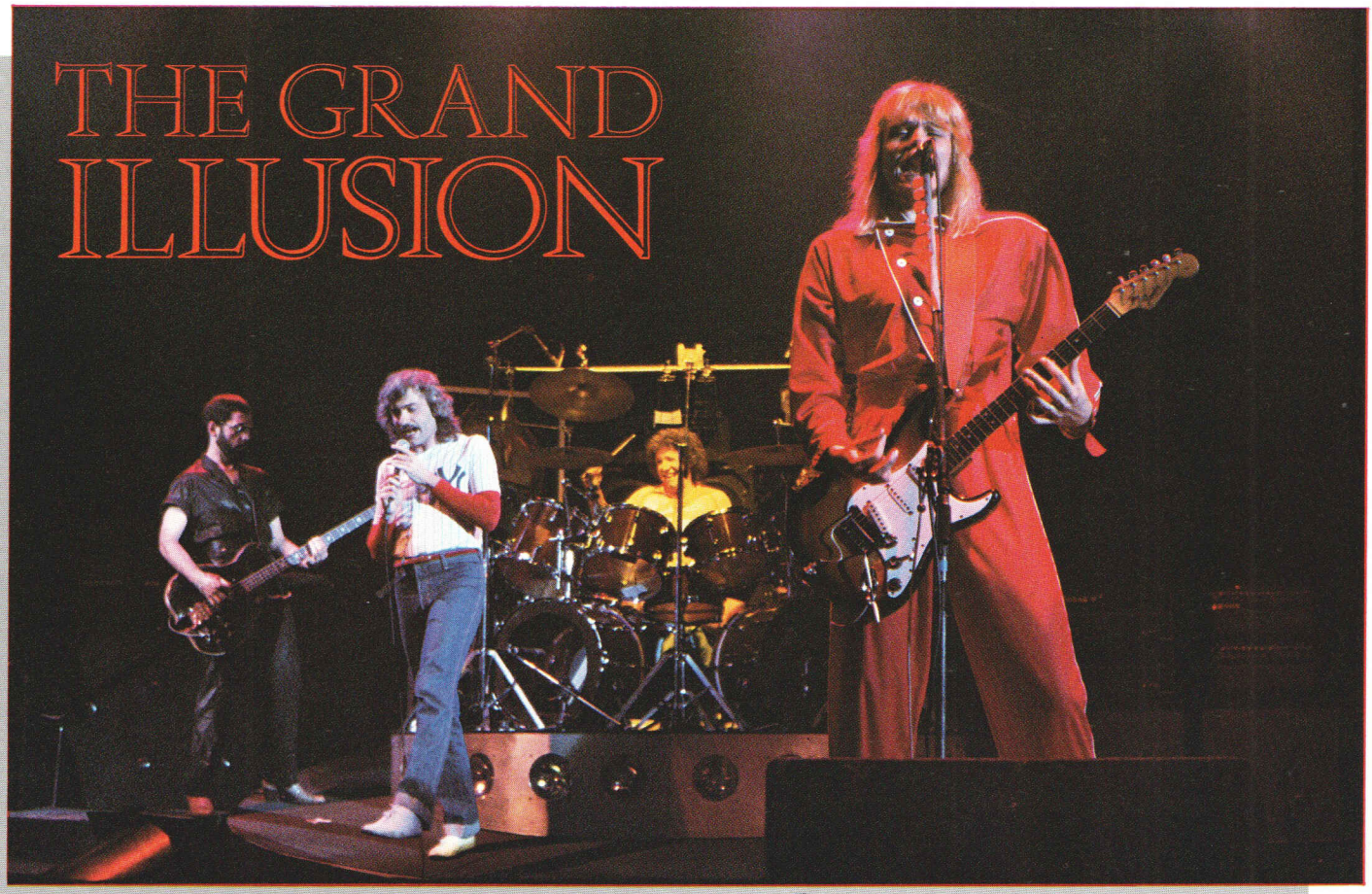
1981's *Fire Of Unknown Origin* featured collaborations with Patti Smith, Michael Moorcock and rock critic R. Meltzer, with Martin Birch again producing. The highlight of the set was the mildly tasteless 'Joan Crawford (Has Risen From The Grave)' but, on the whole, it was a lacklustre effort. 1982 saw the band put out yet another live LP, the double album *ETI*, an engaging romp through old and new favourites.

Although the Eighties found the band faltering somewhat, Blue Oyster Cult have proved to be at once one of the most volatile and most consistent of hard rock bands. Their best work may well be behind them but they have set enduring standards in intelligent noise. PETER CLARK

Blue Oyster Cult
Recommended Listening

Blue Oyster Cult (CBS 64904) (Includes: Transmaniacon MC, Stairway To The Stars, Before The Kiss, A Redcap, Redeemed, Workshop Of The Telescopes); *On Your Feet Or On Your Knees* (CBS 88116) (Includes; Harvester Of Eyes, Last Days Of May, 7 Screaming Diz-Busters, Cities On Flame, Hot Rails To Hell, Me 262).

THE GRAND ILLUSION



FROM THE END of the Seventies, American adult-oriented rock music was dominated by a triumvirate of easy-listening rock bands – Journey, Foreigner and Styx. With their meticulous combination of pop and pomp, Styx blended music and theatre to create their brand of suburban escapism, earning themselves a long string of platinum-selling albums and hit singles.

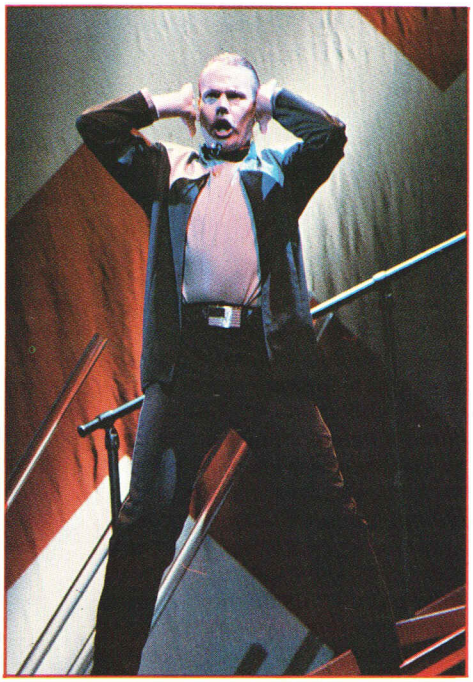
The Styx foundations were laid as long ago as 1963 in Chicago, Illinois, when twin brothers Chuck and John Panozzo, on bass and drums respectively, began jamming with keyboardist/vocalist Dennis De Young. For five years their efforts were confined to the rehearsal room, until they were joined by guitarists James Young and John Curulewski in 1968. Calling themselves the Tradewinds, they began playing around the Chicago area.

In 1970 they changed their name to Styx, signed with the locally-based Wooden Nickel label, and released their first album, *Styx I*. As a debut it showed considerable promise, though the ideas were in the main poorly executed. Their second LP, *Styx II* (1973), was an improvement (and eventually yielded their first US hit single, 'Lady', in 1975), but in common with subsequent albums on Wooden Nickel, *The Serpent Is Rising* (1973) and *Man Of Miracles* (1974), it lacked depth.

1975 saw a change of label to A&M, and that year's album, *Equinox*, marked a creative watershed in Styx's career. Such classic songs as 'Midnight Ride', 'Born For Adventure' and the mini-epic 'Suite Madame Blue', were still looked upon as one of their most accomplished tracks.

The replacement of guitarist John Curulewski by the charismatic Tommy Shaw in 1975 gave the band another fillip. Shaw's commitment and energy onstage provided a new foil for vocalist Dennis De Young, while his superior guitar abilities and vocal harmonising enhanced their recorded work, as evidenced by 1976's *Crystal Ball* album.

Styx: pop, pomp and pantomime



Top: Hicks from the Styx, from left Chuck Panozzo, Dennis DeYoung, John Panozzo and James Young. Above: Can you hear me at the back? – James Young as Mr Roboto, a character who featured on Kilroy Was Here. *Opposite: Styx's* Paradise Theater.

Paradise lost

But it wasn't until 1977's *The Grand Illusion* that Styx made the breakthrough to mass recognition in the US. With this album, they finally hit on just the right mixture of syrupy vocal harmonies, pompous lyrics and ersatz rock'n'roll to beguile the great middle-American public into buying the album in quantities that quickly earned it platinum status. Tracks such as 'Miss America', 'Superstars', and 'Castle Walls' were to remain Styx favourites, while 'Come Sail Away', the single from the album, was a Top Ten hit.

The success of *The Grand Illusion* signalled Styx's elevation to the US stadium circuit, where they staged their typically baroque performances complete with massive light show and much formula gesturing in the rock'n'roll tradition.

With seamless professionalism, they continued to put out an album a year for the next three years. *Pieces Of Eight* (1978)

featured a slight softening of vocal style and less emphasis on the keyboards, while *Cornerstone* (1979) seemed to betray a lack of direction, highlighting their tendency towards blandness. Both albums went platinum, and 'Babe', taken from *Cornerstone*, was a US Number 1 in 1979, and their first UK hit, reaching Number 6 in 1980.

Their tenth album, *Paradise Theater* (1980), represented a new, clearer direction for Styx. It was a concept album built around the story of the Paradise Theater in Chicago, which writer De Young used as a rather clumsy metaphor to describe America's decline in the late Seventies. Originally 'built for perpetuity' in the Thirties, the Paradise Theater fell into disuse and was eventually torn down in

1958. Two singles, 'The Best Of Times' and 'Too Much Time On My Hands', both reached the US Top Ten in early 1981.

1983's *Kilroy Was Here* continued with the concept approach. Based on another De Young idea, it told the story of Kilroy, the 'last rocker' at large in the US of the near future when rock music had been banned, and all rock'n'roll musicians locked up. Styx made an 11-minute film of the 'story' with members of the band acting the different parts. It was directed by Brian Gibson, who had directed *Breaking Glass* (1980). This was shown as a prelude to their live appearances, for which the various band-members continued to play their film parts. The whole became woven together as part-film show, part-concert and part-theatre; a kind of multi-media rock'n'roll pantomime.

Styx's MOR soft-rock formula has found less favour in the UK than their homeland. In the US, however, since 1977, their mega-band status has ensured a consistently enthusiastic response to their increasingly ambitious and grandiose projects.

CHRIS COLLINGWOOD

Styx
Recommended Listening

Rock Galaxy (RCA Records CL 43215) (Includes: Lady, You Need Love, I'm Gonna Make You Feel It, Best Thing, Right Away, Father OSA); *Kilroy Was Here* (A&M Records AMLX 63734) (Includes: Mr Roboto, Don't Let It End, Heavy Metal Poisoning, Double Life, Cold War, High Time).

Below: The guitars of Young (left) and Tommy Shaw provide crucial elements of the Styx sound.

VAN HALEN

Going Dutch with the showmen of US rock

SINCE THE GREAT rock festivals of the late Sixties and early Seventies and the subsequent advent of arena rock, concerts in the United States have increasingly taken on the air of dazzling, money-spinning circuses. In response to the demands of this growing stadium circuit, a new breed of 'power and spectacle' heavy-rock band emerged in the late Seventies. In the forefront of this movement were US hard-rockers Van Halen, who combined a broadside of on-stage visual effects with their highly accomplished and aggressive style of playing.

The Van Halen brothers, Eddie (born 26 January 1957) and Alex (born 8 May 1955) started life in Nijmegen, Holland, and began studying classical piano at an early age at the insistence of their musically-minded father. In their teens, however, they changed to guitar and drums respectively. The family moved to California in 1968, where the brothers attended Pasadena High School and met singer Dave Lee Roth (born 10 October 1955 in Indiana).

The trio recruited a bassist and in 1974 began playing modest, low-key gigs under the name Mammoth. The initial bass player was replaced by Michael Anthony and, after further exhaustive gigging on the local circuit, they came to the attention of Kiss bassist Gene Simmons. He introduced them to producer Ted Templeman, who not only signed them to Warner Brothers in 1977 but also went on to produce all their albums.

Ready for Eddie

Re-christened Van Halen, the band recorded their first album, *Van Halen* (1978). It was an inspired debut for such a young band, highlighting in particular the guitar artistry of Eddie Van Halen. His astounding playing technique and inventive use of tremelo effects on tracks like 'Ain't Talkin' About Love' and 'Runnin' With The Devil' prompted singer Dave Lee Roth to comment: 'Eddie Van Halen is the first guitar hero of the Eighties; all the other guitar heroes are dead.'

A sweeping statement perhaps, but Eddie Van Halen's playing was consistently and widely admired – not only by fans, but by other guitarists too. In 1983 *Guitar Heroes* magazine asked practically every major rock guitarist to name their favourite player – Eddie Van Halen came out on top by a mile.

By the end of 1978, constant live work had earned Van Halen an impressive reputation, and Black Sabbath chose them as support on their American tour that year – only to be resoundingly upstaged by them. The second album, *Van Halen II* (1979), was again dominated by high-energy rock, although there were more subtle inclusions such as 'Spanish Fly' (an acoustic instrumental) and 'Dance The Night Away', a US Top Twenty single. On tracks such as 'Somebody Get Me A Doctor', however, Van Halen reverted to the characteristic guitar histrionics, which they performed with an extraordinary technical facility.

The band's 1979 world tour was their first sustained exposure to consistently large audiences and confirmed their status as a top stadium act – so much so that nine months of 1980 were also given over to touring, and by 1982 they were able to gross 10 million dollars from the curiously-named Hide Your Sheep tour.

Van Halen failed to continue their all-conquering progress, however, with their third album. *Women And Children First* (1980) was a hastily recorded affair that failed to realise the promise of the preceding releases. One track, 'Chains', was a notable exception, but otherwise the album was a self-indulgent ramble that fell short of their consistently excellent

Inset below: All tanked up and ready to roll – Van Halen prepare to assault the senses. Inset bottom: On-stage mayhem with balloons and bubbly – Eddie gets a soaking. Inset right: Eddie Van Halen strikes up his best guitar-hero pose. Below: Vocalist Dave Lee Roth.

live work. Fortunately, the balance was redressed by their fourth LP *Fair Warning* (1981), which was a welcome return to their original high-powered heavy rock and as strong a statement as anything since *Van Halen*.

Covering tracks

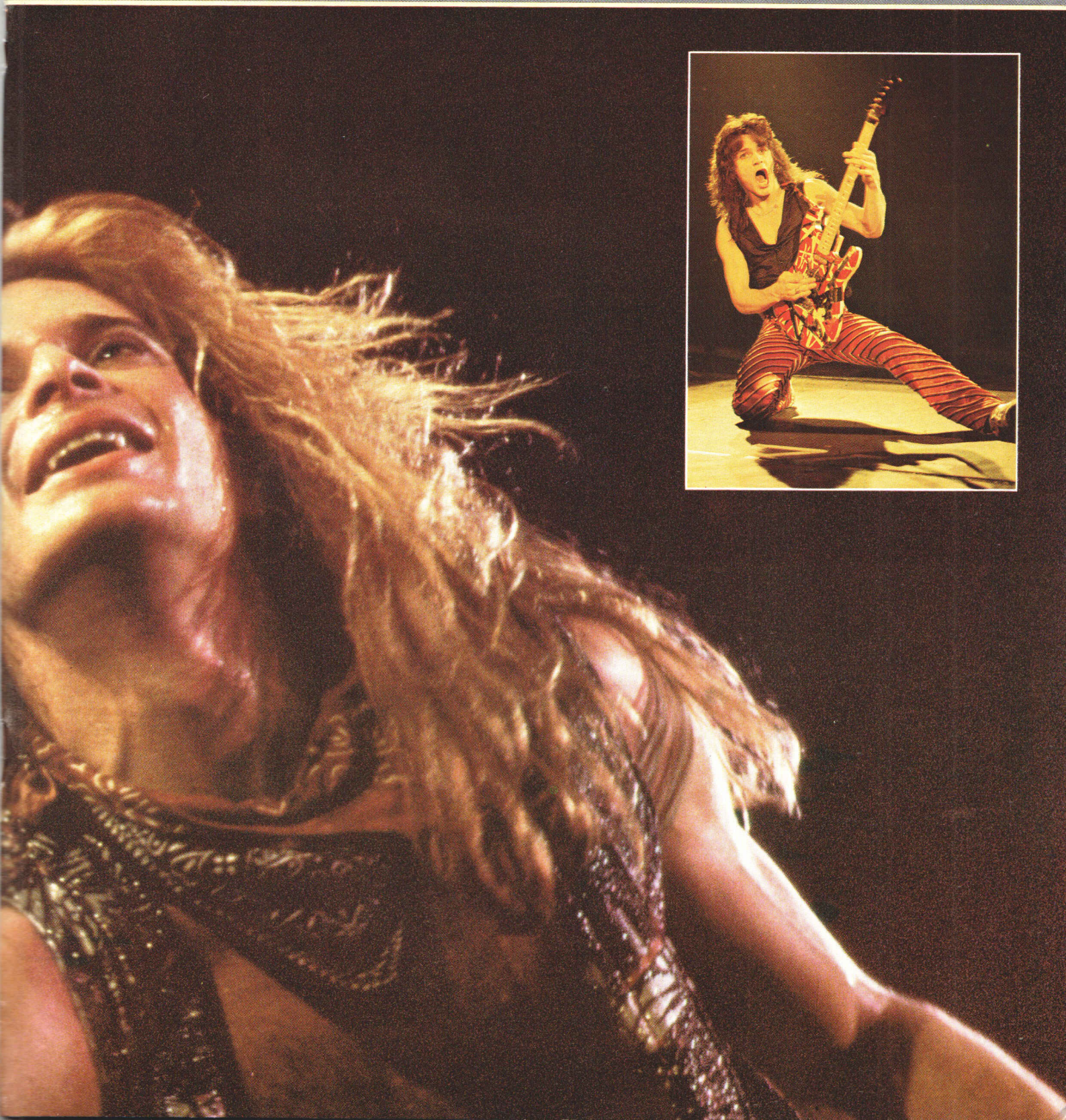
Diver Down, the band's 1982 album release, comprised 12 tracks, four of which were covers. These included unremarkable versions of Roy Orbison's '(Oh) Pretty Woman' and Martha and the Vandellas' 'Dancing In The Street', both of which reached the US Top Forty when released as singles. Although previous albums had incorporated one or two cover tracks – a version of the Kinks' 'You Really Got Me' from *Van Halen* was their first US hit single – four covers on one album seemed to betray a rather cavalier approach to recording. Only glimmers of their original rock'n'roll spirit shone through on 'Hang 'Em High' and 'The Full Bug'.

The main criticism levelled against Van Halen is that they achieved too much too soon. Their debut album, recorded when they were still hungry, showed how menacing and incisive their music could be, and although *Women And Children First* was their only truly disappointing album, they consistently failed to produce the material they were fully capable of.

On stage, however, they were brash and brilliant, careering through a chain of modern rock'n'roll anthems. Van Halen supplied visual entertainment allied with consummate technical skill. JAY WILLIAMS

Van Halen
Recommended Listening

Van Halen (Warner Brothers BSK3075) (Includes: Ain't Talkin' About Love, Runnin' With The Devil, Eruption, You Really Got Me, Atomic Punk, Ice Cream Man).



ROCK·IN·EXILE

The triumphant travels of Foreigner

FOREIGNER ARE ROCK'S equivalent of that old show-business cliché 'the overnight success story'. With the release of their debut album in March 1977, this Anglo-American group leapt from obscurity to stardom. *Foreigner* sold a staggering five million copies, receiving saturation air-play and catapulting the group on to the money-spinning, stadium-rock circuit.

But despite this success – or perhaps *because* of it – Foreigner are a band the critics love to hate. Many journalists lump them in with contemporaries such as Asia, Styx, REO Speedwagon and Loverboy and dismiss their music as bland, soulless and calculated. Much of this criticism is unfair; Foreigner are by far the most talented band in the AOR genre, successfully fusing both English and American influences. In their leader, Englishman Mick Jones, Foreigner possess a first-rate guitarist and fine songwriter – and in American vocalist Lou Gramm they have arguably the best rock singer around, a bluesy wailer in the

Inset top: Foreigner's first edition, from left Lou Gramm, Al Greenwood, Mick Jones, Ian McDonald (standing), Dennis Elliott and Ed Gagliardi. Above: The band pace the boards in America. Below left: Singer Lou Gramm gives it some emotion.

full-blooded style of Free-period Paul Rodgers and Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant.

Disque blues

Mick Jones formed Foreigner in New York in 1976 after years of dues-paying in various bands, either obscure or only near-successful. At the age of 18 he gave up a career in surveying to travel to France as '24th guitar player' with instrumental band Nero and the Gladiators. The group dissolved while still in France but Jones chose to remain on the continent, pursuing a career as songwriter and session man for various French artists. Eventually he teamed up with 'the French Elvis', Johnny Halliday, leading his backing band. Halliday and Jones often visited London and New York to record, with Jimmy Page, Steve Marriott, Peter Frampton and producer Glyn Johns often helping out on the sessions.

Going West

In the early Seventies a dissatisfied Jones returned to London, initially for studio work with George Harrison, Peter Frampton and others. With ex-Spooky Tooth keyboardist/vocalist Gary Wright, Jones formed the unsuccessful Wonderwheel; a year later, on the advice of Island Records boss Chris Blackwell, the pair re-formed Spooky Tooth. This English blues/rock band had enjoyed moderate popularity in the late Sixties, with former members including Luther Grosvenor (who went on to Mott the Hoople), Greg Ridley (Humble Pie) and Mike Kellie (the Only Ones).

The new-look Spooky Tooth concentrated on the American market and released three further, moderately successful albums, splitting in 1974 when Wright opted for a solo career. Jones then worked briefly as an A&R man for an English record company before landing a job as second guitarist in the Leslie West Band, spending the next nine months plastering American audiences with heavy-rock licks. When West's group folded, Jones returned to New York where, supported by manager Bud Prager (whose clients included Mountain and West, Bruce and Laing), he wrote songs, formulated plans for a new group and paid the rent with session work.

The seeds for Foreigner were sown when Jones contacted another expatriate Englishman, multi-instrumentalist Ian McDonald, and suggested forming a band. McDonald had been a founder member of the influential British group, King Crimson, whom he left after the successful LP *In The Court Of The Crimson King* (1969). During subsequent years he dabbled in a solo career, played on numerous sessions and produced various off-beat acts such as Ireland's Fruup and America's Fireballet. Having laid the foundations, Jones and McDonald enlisted two Americans, former Storm keyboardist Al Greenwood and bassist Ed Gagliardi. The rhythm section was completed by English drummer Dennis Elliott, a noted session player who had met Mick Jones at the recording of an Ian Hunter solo album.

The final recruit was a native New Yorker, vocalist Lou Gramm. Gramm co-founded and sang with hard-rock band Black Sheep and his display of vocal bravado on the group's two mid-Seventies albums convinced Jones that he was the man for Foreigner. Gramm was enlisted to the band after an audition in which he tackled songs like 'Feels Like The First Time'. The auditions were recorded – and eventually secured the band a worldwide deal with Atlantic Records.

After over a year of preparation, *Foreigner* was released in March 1977. Co-produced by Jones, McDonald and Gary Lyons, it yielded the US hits 'Feels Like The First Time', 'Long, Long Way From Home' and a worldwide smash, 'Cold As Ice'. Before the release of the album, *Double Vision*, in June 1978, Foreigner built upon their ecstatic American reception with a world tour, picking up gold and platinum awards from Europe, Japan, the Far East and Australia. *Double Vision* equalled the massive sales of their first LP and brought further US hit singles in 'Hot Blooded', 'Double Vision' and 'Blue Morning, Blue Day'.

The third album, *Head Games*, followed in September 1979, and was preceded by the replacement of Gagliardi by another Briton, Rick Wills. Wills' long list of credits included stints with Peter Frampton, Pink Floyd's Dave Gilmour, Roxy Music and the re-united Small Faces. *Head Games* continued the band's policy of switching producers with the presence of Roy Thomas Baker (Queen, the Cars). But despite multi-platinum sales and the inclusion of a Foreigner classic ('Dirty White Boy'), Jones later described the album as 'a disappointment' and, amid bitter recriminations, sacked McDonald and Greenwood. 'Things had become a little blasé and predictable,' Jones told reporters.

Guest stars

The fourth Foreigner album, *4*, emerged in July 1981 after a year of intensive rehearsal and recording and was co-produced by Jones and Robert John 'Mutt' Lange (whose credits included AC/DC, the Boomtown Rats and City Boy). Despite being reduced to a four-piece, Foreigner's attack was maintained with guest appearances by ace Motown saxophonist Junior Walker, guitarist Hugh McCracken and synthesiser whizz-kid Thomas Dolby, resulting in the band's strongest album to date. Highlights included 'Urgent', the stage favourite 'Juke Box Hero' and the ballad 'Waiting For A Girl Like You', a worldwide success that reached Number 2 in the US and Number 8 in the UK. Foreigner supported *4* with a year-long world tour, releasing a greatest hits album, *Records*, in late 1982.

Thanks to Jones' commercial acumen and undoubted instrumental and songwriting talents, Foreigner remained one step ahead of their rivals. Their concentration on slick studio production coupled with a willingness to undergo gruelling tours has undoubtedly paid dividends in the form of vast record sales and packed concerts.

CHRIS MALCOLM

Foreigner
Recommended Listening

4 (Atlantic K50356) (Includes: Woman In Black, Urgent, Juke Box Hero, Waiting For A Girl Like You, Don't Let Go, Night Life); *Records* (Atlantic 78.0999-1) (Includes: Cold As Ice, Dirty White Boy, Hot Blooded, Feels Like The First Time, Head Games, Double Vision).

Pat Benatar

Hard rock's woman for all seasons?

THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF women in rock in the late Seventies and early Eighties have been well documented. But in terms of success, Pat Benatar towered above them all, a colossus in Spandex, out-selling, out-drawing and out-Grammying all competition.

Pat Benatar was middle America's rock'n'roll woman of the Eighties, mirroring all that was safe and acceptable, both musically and socially. She once said in an interview, 'I'm not very avant-garde or leftist, and I'm not really a tough girl. I see myself as singing mainstream Eighties rock 'n'roll.' And so teenage girls (and boys) flock to baseball stadiums to see her perform, punctuating their applause with clenched fists and buying her albums by the million because she is just like them.

Born in Brooklyn in 1953, Pat Andrzejewski grew up in Lindenhurst, New York, a middle-class New York City suburb. She recalls having 'a happy childhood, a real Catholic upbringing – cheerleader, the beach, Gidget.' Her father was a sheet metal worker and her mother a singer who was going to join the chorus of the Metropolitan Opera but abandoned her career when she became pregnant with Pat. Both her mother and grandmother loved opera and Pat began singing at nine with an eye to a career in serious music, despite her love for the Beatles and other British invasion bands. 'I always sang art songs and opera,' she remembers. 'I studied with a great teacher, training to go to Juilliard (America's premier music conservatory), and then I got bored with the idea.'

Fortune teller

So, after high-school graduation, Pat enrolled in the State University of New York at Stony Brook to study health education. She dropped her studies after two years and at 19 married her high-school sweetheart, Dennis Benatar, and moved with him to Richmond, Virginia, where he was stationed at the local army base.

Benatar worked as a bank teller for the first two years of her stay in Richmond, a job that led to her first fantasies of fortune, if not fame. Explaining why she started her singing career, Benatar recalled: 'I sat in that teller's cage every day, looked at the money and thought: "I know there's a way for me to have this without going to jail." I didn't want to sing, but I always knew that if I did it well enough, it could work. So I quit the job on an impulse and became a singing waitress.' Benatar quickly realised that the Richmond Holiday Inn lounge circuit was not the road to a recording contract and so she and her husband moved back to New York in 1975.

At an open audition at Catch A Rising

Left and opposite: Pat Benatar – a colossus in Spandex. Benatar succeeded in combining mighty vocals with a sexy image to make a mint.

Star, an Upper East Side comedian's showcase and cabaret, Benatar's three octave rendition of Judy Garland's 'Rockabye Your Baby With A Dixie Melody' caught the attention of club owner Rick Newman. Although it was 3.45 am, he was so impressed that he booked her into a regular spot at the club and a year later became her manager, a position he still held in the Eighties.

Newman was able to persuade Chrysalis Records chairmen Terry Ellis and Chris Wright to see Benatar's act and in 1978 they signed her to their label. She quickly assembled a band, including a guitarist from Cleveland named Neil Geraldo who was brought in to assist on the first LP. Geraldo stayed with the band, becoming Benatar's musical director and her lover.

In The Heat Of The Night was released in 1979. Produced in part by Blondie and Knack veteran Michael Chapman and his associate Peter Coleman, it went gold and produced two US hit singles, 'Heartbreaker' and 'We Live For Love'. Press reaction was positive at first. Benatar was one of the first women to evoke Robert Plant and Roger Daltrey as her inspiration, employ a heavy-rock band to back her up, and dress sexy on stage. But instead of the remote sensuality of Debbie Harry or the eccentric androgyny of Patti Smith, her sexiness was suburban shopping mall assertion. As she put it herself: 'A lot of women singers today seem to be saying: "if you love me and then hurt me, I'll die." I say: "If you love me, then hurt me, I'll kick your ass."'

Shedding her image

In 1980, Benatar released her follow-up album, *Crimes Of Passion*, which sold more than three million copies and yielded her first Top Ten single, 'Hit Me With Your Best Shot'. *Crimes Of Passion* was produced by Keith Olsen, known for his work with the Grateful Dead, and continued in the mainstream heavy-rock vein of the debut. Although Benatar contributed more songs to the LP, including her bombastic epic against child abuse, 'Hell Is For Children', it was a style that she began to find increasingly confining.

On her 1980 tour, as opening act for the Doobie Brothers, Benatar began to feel embarrassed by her sexpot image. She took to wearing a jacket to cover her revealing leotards, refusing to take it off even when, at Omaha's Rosenblatt Stadium, the temperature soared past 95 degrees and she was dizzy with the heat. Benatar ascribed her embarrassment to media pressure. 'The thing I'm most reluctant about is all the hoopla made,' she explained. 'I'm not going to stop doing it . . . If I was a man, none of this would be happening. It's just part of my personality. But when people make such a big thing of it, you become inhibited about it . . . you become a parody of yourself.'

Further stresses took their toll during the recording of 1981's *Precious Time* album, bringing Benatar to the verge of a breakdown. She argued with producer Olsen, broke up temporarily with Geraldo and began to wonder if it was all worthwhile. She felt pressured especially to repeat the formula of *Crimes Of Passion*, which had won her a Grammy for Best Female Vocalist. She described this period as 'hellish', saying: 'You wait your whole life for this and when it comes it's not what you expected . . . It stopped being fun. It became a job, a job I didn't want to do.' Nevertheless, *Precious Time* sold two million copies, and in a small but significant change of image, she asserted a new independence by cutting her hair and appearing on stage in trousers instead of tights.

1982 was a better year for Benatar. Having terminated her marriage, she and Geraldo were reconciled and in February were married on the Hawaiian Island of Maui.

Guitarist Scott St Clair Sheets left the band and was replaced by keyboardist Charlie Giordano who gave Benatar a crisper, more lively sound. For her fourth LP, *Get Nervous*, featuring Benatar in a straitjacket on the cover, Geraldo and Peter Coleman's joint production proved to be more sympathetic to Benatar's idea of highly-pronounced vocals than Olsen's had been.

Above: Benatar and husband/musical director Neil Geraldo (left) rock out with the boys in the band. Right: Pat hits with her best shot.

Get Nervous garnered better reviews than her previous LPs and her 1983 tour was both successful and trauma-free. A live LP from the tour, *Live From Earth* (which also included two new studio tracks) was released in September 1983.

Domestic bliss

Benatar has stated that she wants to settle down, have children and be 'the nicest old lady you ever saw', and she and Geraldo were frequently featured in national magazines billing and cooing about their new-found domestic bliss. But a very different picture of Pat Benatar – black tights, spiked heels, head thrown back, and microphone offered to the heavens – stands as a telling portrait of American women in music in the Eighties.

DEBBIE GELLER

Pat Benatar
Recommended Listening

In The Heat Of The Night (Chrysalis CHR 1236) (Includes: No You Don't, Rated X, My Clone Sleeps Alone, So Sincere, In The Heat Of The Night, If You Think You Know How To Love Me); *Live From Earth* (Chrysalis CHR 1451) (Includes: Fire And Ice, Hit Me With Your Best Shot, Heartbreaker, Promises In The Dark, Hell Is For Children, We Live For Love).

TURN IT UP!

How PA systems broke the sound barrier

THE MODERN CONCERT PA (public address) system can no longer be considered as simply a means of sound reinforcement. It has become a creative tool in its own right, and the sound engineer in charge of it will often bear a responsibility equal to that of any band member. This was not always so, however.

By the beginning of the Sixties, the electric guitar had become *the* instrument of modern music. With amplified guitars came a greater need for amplified vocals. The early PA systems were simply an extension of guitar systems: they used the same valve amplifiers to drive speakers primarily designed for instrument amplification. But these were less than suitable for vocal amplification, as their 'peaky' response aggravated feedback problems. To make matters worse, low budgets meant that most groups were less than fussy regarding their choice of microphones; although higher-quality models were available, few groups considered the extra expense worthwhile and so anything that would make a noise was plugged in regardless.

Above: Jimi Hendrix lays into his Marshall stack. Right: Charlie Watkins, pioneer of solid-state PA systems.

Marshall's law

The most popular British amplifier of the Fifties and Sixties was the Vox AC30, a simple but effective 30-watt valve amp favoured by the Shadows and later the Beatles. In 1965 Vox made a significant step forward with the introduction of their 100-watt, TC300 amplifier. This boasted bass, treble and 'presence' controls on each channel and Selmer and WEM soon had similar products on the market. The overall quality was still very poor, however, and these systems were soon to be dwarfed by the introduction of a new guitar amplifier by a man whose name remained at the forefront of modern instrument amplification in the Eighties: Jim Marshall. Marshall's legendary 100-watt guitar

Left: The Vox pop of the moptops. Below: Deep Purple listen to themselves through monitor 'wedges' placed on the stage edge.

amplifier was capable of creating previously unheard-of sound levels and suddenly it was back to square one: you couldn't hear the vocals.

It was obvious that a new PA system, enabling vocals to be audible above the guitar sound, would have to be developed for rock. The major problem was that valve technology in the mid Sixties suffered from electronic instability at higher power levels, or when two amplifiers were used in parallel with each other, leading to feedback and distortion.

Around 1966, RCA introduced the music industry to the delights of transformerless, solid-state circuitry by designing a circuit for a transistor amplifier. All the major manufacturers experimented with this new format, but they all came up with the same answer: transistorised amplification did not produce the warmth or depth of sound of valve amps. Furthermore, its distortion was harsh and unpleasant – unlike the smooth, creamy nature of the valve equivalent.

Yet although the valve had advantages over the transistor for guitar amplification, the cleaner sound of the solid-state devices was ideal for PA applications. Equipment manufacturers at the time – with the exception of Charlie Watkins of WEM (Watkins Electric Music) – all seemed to miss this point, but it was one that Watkins was quick to exploit.

The slave trade

Watkins brought together two new concepts in sound reinforcement, both of which basically sprang from the advantages of this new stable transistor technology. First he separated the mixer from the power amplifier with the introduction of a small, five-input console, the Audiomaster.

Second, because transistor amps could be coupled together without the instability problems experienced with valve circuits, it made it possible to build a large PA system from a number of smaller units, and this gave rise to the modular or 'slave' system still used in the Eighties. The line output from the Audiomaster was connected to the input of the first 'slave' power amp; this had a parallel socket to allow the signal to be linked to a second slave, and from there to a third slave and so on.

In 1967, at the Windsor Jazz and Blues Festival, Watkins unveiled the world's first ever 1000-watt PA system. The appearance of the system's banks of speakers earned it the title of the 'Wall of Sound'. It was truly a revolution in sound reinforcement – a system of remarkable power and clarity – and soon every top band in the country was using WEM equipment. Several Audiomasters could be

Mixing the Music

The main PA mixer is generally centrally positioned somewhere in the mid-stalls so that the engineer can hear the balance of the sound as one of the audience. Signals from the stage are connected to the mixer via a single multicore cable which carries all the separate signals down possibly dozens of individual cables.

Any instrument with an acoustic output – guitar amps, drums, etc – will have a microphone placed closely to it. Certain modern microphones are designed to take the massive sound pressure levels involved with rock music, and they are also built to be sensitive only to sound arriving from directly in front of them: this 'unidirectional' characteristic helps stop the sound of other instruments 'spilling' into them. Purely electronic instruments, such as synthesisers, will generally be connected directly to the mixer from their line outputs. Having reached the desk, each signal can be individually processed with onboard equalisation (sophisticated tone controls) and auxiliary equipment, all of which can enhance or completely change its character.

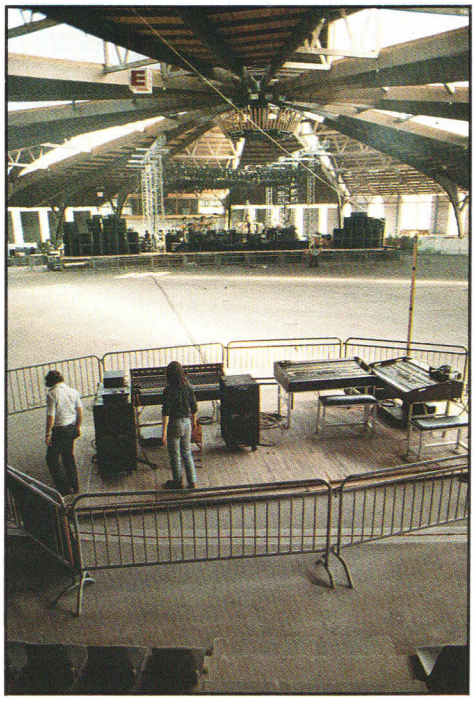
By the late Seventies, new technology had led to highly sophisticated mixing consoles.

'Compressors' are used to maintain a constant signal level from any source prone to excessive fluctuation such as a bass guitar or vocals. 'Gates' and 'expanders' are used to reduce the effect of any spilling between microphones, while a multitude of effects units are used to introduce artificial reverb, echo and a whole variety of other tricks such as pitch changing, flanging and chorusing.

linked together to provide more channels, and it became common practice to mike everything up through the PA rather than using the system exclusively for vocals.

The next significant development in the PA's evolution came in the Seventies with the American approach of using horn-loaded speaker systems (originally designed for the cinema) which were compact yet loud for the power involved. Designing a system to fill a large area so that the sound quality is consistent from the front row to the back demands a lot more than just knowing how to pile a mass of columns on top of each other. Some of the answers lie in the judicious use of horn-loading to control the throw and dispersion angles of each unit. Gradually the 'bins and horns' approach took the place of the column for all larger-scale applications.

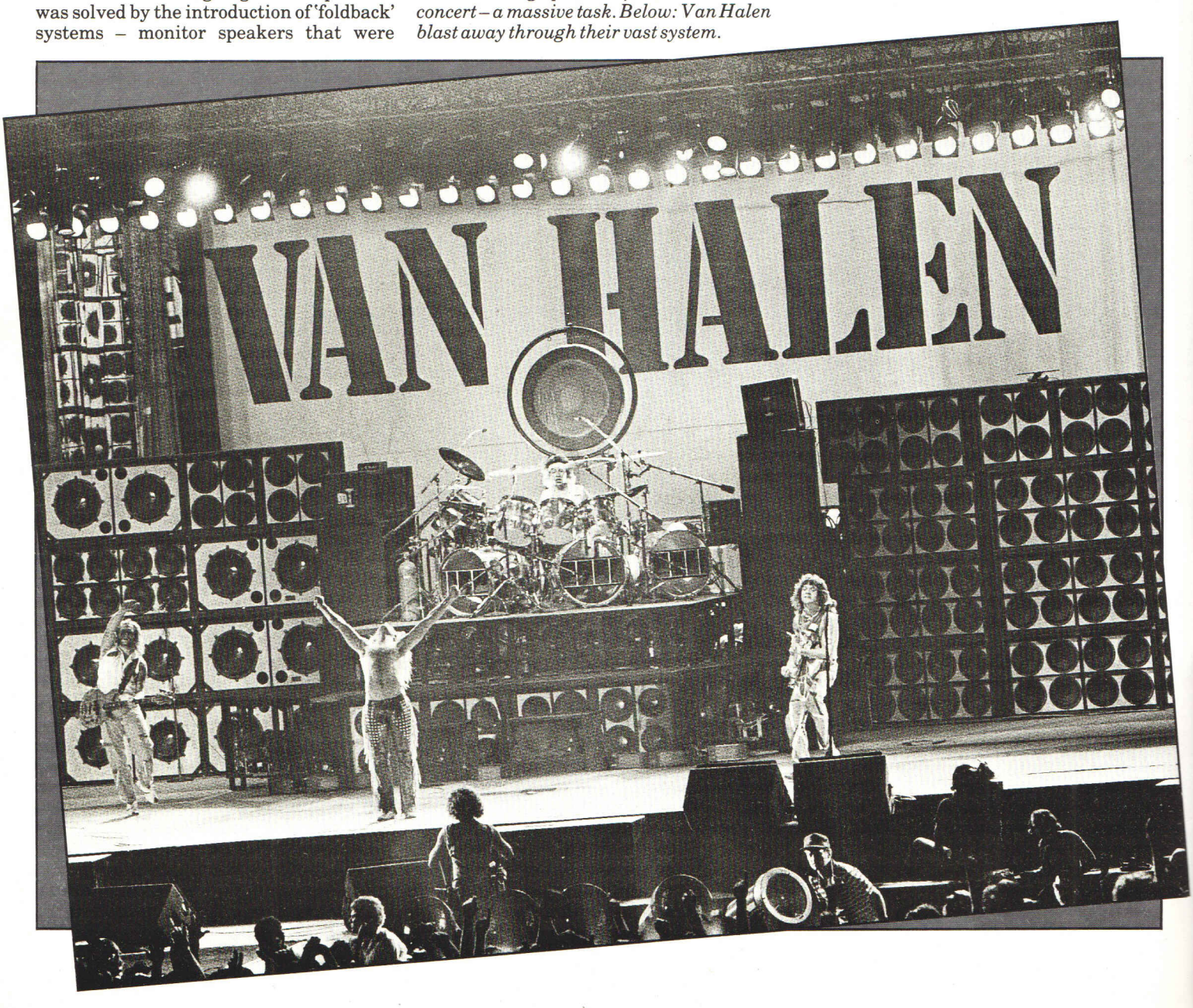
But with all these developments in PA technology, another problem had presented itself – although the audience now had no difficulty in hearing the vocals and acoustic instruments, the general increase in sound levels meant that the band members themselves often found it hard to make out what was going on. This problem was solved by the introduction of 'foldback' systems – monitor speakers that were placed on stage to allow the performers to hear a balanced representation of what each band member was playing and/or singing. The most popular type of purpose-built monitor speaker stood on the floor facing the artist and was generally referred to as a 'wedge' because of its shape.



Above: Setting up the PA for a Genesis concert – a massive task. Below: Van Halen blast away through their vast system.

Large and powerful PA systems marked the start of a continuing power game played between major rock acts of the Seventies. For many bands, the visual impact of a massive sound and lighting rig was an integral part of their stage show, and systems of 25-40,000 watts became the norm for major venues and festivals.

In the late Seventies and early Eighties, the wealth of the multi-track recording industry gave birth to a whole new world of signal-processing equipment. Little by little this new technology was applied to the live situation until a state-of-the-art live mixing console and auxiliary processing equipment rack became comparable in its sophistication to a top professional studio installation; in fact the equipment was often interchangeable. Live sound reproduction in the Eighties was better than it had ever been. JIM BETTERIDGE



THE GREAT MUSICIANS

Steve Howe

In 1970, Steve Howe replaced Peter Banks in Yes and sounded his arrival on record with a spiralling, glittering arpeggio on 'Yours Is No Disgrace', the powerful opening piece on *The Yes Album* (1971). This number showed all the facets of Howe's playing as, amid changes of rhythm and tempo, the guitar switched in rapid succession from melody through harsh, distorted clanking to precision riffing with the bass and organ. Such fluency, imagination and versatility helped Howe gain a reputation for excellence, and throughout the Seventies he refined his style through constant experimentation and practice. The music of Yes provided a perfect outlet for his stylistic development.

Born in London in 1947, Howe received a Christmas present of a guitar when he was 12. 'The idea of playing a flashy guitar and standing up in front of an audience seemed a bit more exciting than anything else,' he has said. 'When I started learning how to play it, I found the whole process was abstract enough to keep my attention for more than three minutes.' At the age of 14, he started playing in a friend's group in clubs around Tottenham and, after leaving school, joined R&B group the Syndicats. The Syndicats recorded a handful of singles with producer Joe Meek and, although these flopped, numbers such as 'Howling For My Baby' contained some excellent playing from Howe.

In 1965, Steve left the Syndicats and joined the In Crowd, a group that later evolved into Tomorrow and recorded the hippie anthem 'My White Bicycle'. Steve had made impressive use of the new wah-wah pedal and he began to gain a reputation as a psychedelic guitar hero – he even jammed with the master, Jimi Hendrix, at the UFO club. Acid heads and freaks were amazed at his playing, but Steve himself was less certain: 'I could never get into perspective my ability or talent. I was happy to be in a group but felt like a lost sheep.'

After Tomorrow's demise in 1968, Steve formed his own outfit, Bodast, making an album that, for various reasons, was not released until over a decade later; he also rehearsed with Aynsley Dunbar and Ronnie Wood and even joined the Nice for one day. 'It wasn't what I wanted to do,' says Howe, 'although I always thought a mixture of Keith [Emerson] and myself would have been fantastic.' Then, in 1970, came the call from Chris Squire, bass player with Yes.

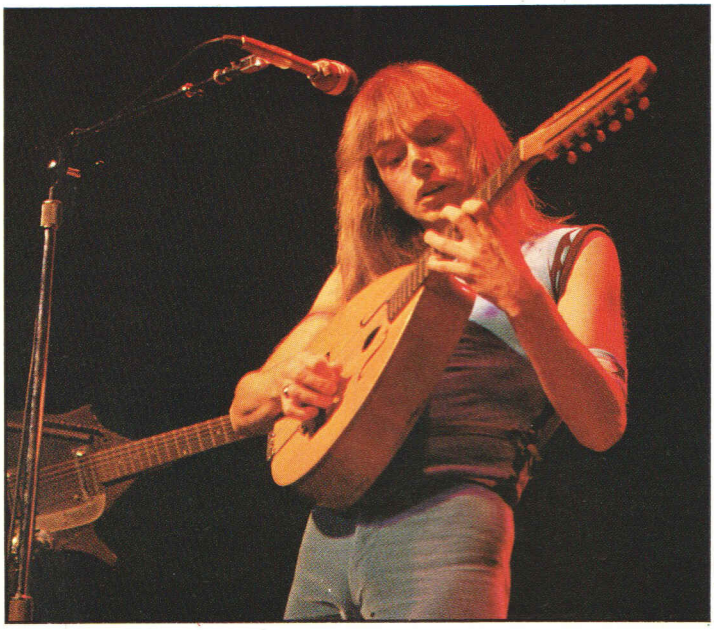
Despite early problems, Yes soon found international success and Steve became a revered, highly influential musician. As a composer he contributed greatly to Yes' output. 'Roundabout', one of their most popular songs, was filled with characteristic Howe ideas: snatches of Spanish guitar, unison runs with keyboard-player Rick Wakeman, complex, mysterious effects and subtle Elizabethan flourishes. On 'The Clap', first heard on *The Yes Album*, and on 'Mood For A Day', from *Fragile* (1971), Howe was featured on acoustic guitar; on stage, the two pieces were combined for a showstopping routine. Steve carefully picked his way through the contrasting ragtime and classical themes – and managed to make such technical expertise both entertaining and musically valid.

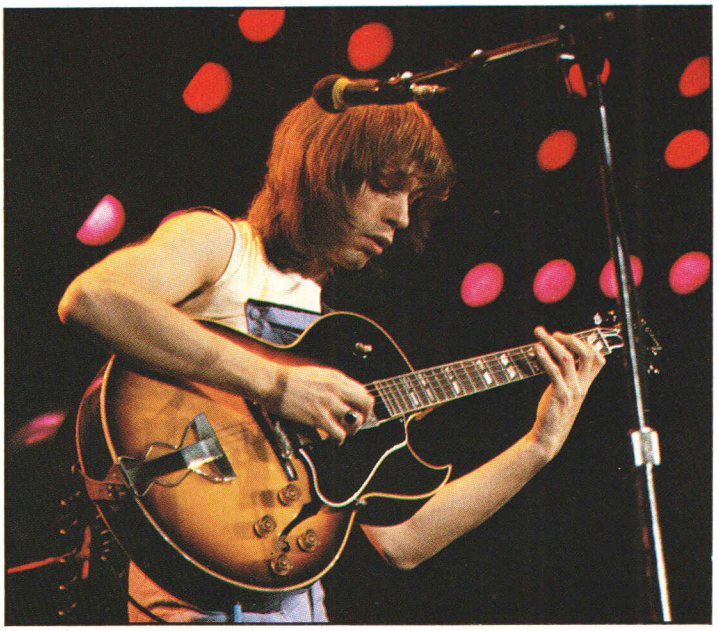
Howe has used a wide range of instruments on stage and in the studio, including a Fender Stratocaster, Gibson Les Paul, Kohno Spanish, Martin acoustic, Danelectro Coral electric sitar, Sho-Bud Pedal Steel, Fender twin-neck steel, a banjo-guitar and even a Gibson Florentine Electric Mandolin. For some years, his favoured guitar for stage work was a semi-acoustic Gibson ES-175.

Yes became notorious for dramatic splits that threatened to tear the group apart, but Howe stayed with them until February 1981; he then went on to join Asia, a group that enjoyed immediate success. Back on the road, the guitarist could once again play his old favourite, 'The Clap', to cheering fans.

Howe recorded two solo albums, *Beginnings* (1975) and *The Steve Howe Album* (1979), but his best work is to be found in the mass of recordings made by Yes over 10 productive years. Many guitarists since have copied Howe's use of the guitar as a 'voice' within a band's music. Says Steve: 'That was the trait I liked in Yes – steering away from clichés. That was my idea on guitar. I knew all the clichés but I didn't want to play them.' CHRIS WELCH

Howe's tricks! Steve Howe plays his favoured Gibson ES-175 (below), demonstrates his lute licks before switching to a Coral electric sitar (below left) and solos on a comparatively conventional Gibson Les Paul (overleaf).





THE HISTORY OF
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